

## ***FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 7, 2014

**Agenda Item:** Proposed FAS Acquisition at South Billings Bridge

**Division:** Fisheries

**Action Needed:** Endorsement to Proceed

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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### **Background**

This approximately 10.5-acre Yellowstone River property is situated on the outskirts of south Billings about 7.3 miles downstream of the Duck Creek Bridge FAS and 6.5 miles upstream of the East Bridge FAS. Billings Riverfront Park is located directly across the river but due to the river's configuration there is no good boat access even for carry-in boats on that side of the river. This is a rare opportunity to improve public boating access on the Yellowstone River so close to Billings. Additionally, this section of the Yellowstone River has been selected by the American Rivers West Blue Trails program to promote recreation opportunities on rivers with a strong urban interface, one of only five river reaches selected for this program nationwide. A strong community group consisting of city, state and federal government agencies, NGO's and educators is developing around this program. The concept of this program is to select a section of river to be adopted by a local community that is dedicated to improving family-friendly river recreation activities conserving natural resources, and building the river community. This potential access site has been presented to this group, and it appears likely that promoting this site as a public access in the Billings area may become their first major project. There is also a strong potential for this organization to contribute towards funding of the acquisition.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

There has been no public involvement process to date. If the Commission chooses to endorse this project, FWP will begin its due diligence process which will include a review of environmental considerations and a 30-day public comment period. Information from this process will be shared with the Commission when seeking final approval for acquisition.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

At this point in the process no alternatives have been discussed or considered. In the MEPA process FWP will consider two alternatives: the "no action" alternative or acquisition of the property and subsequent development of an FAS.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends that the Commission endorse efforts to pursue acquisition of a fishing access site on the Yellowstone River in the south Billings area. Upon completion of MEPA, including public scoping and completion of the associated due diligence requirements, the proposal will be presented once again to the Commission for final approval.

### **Proposed Motion:**

I move that the Commission authorize FWP to pursue acquisition of the South Billings property for a Fishing Access Site.